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AUTHOR O'Connell, Carleen; Hagans, Rex
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ABSTRACT

Rural education trends in the 1980s--influenced by decreased federal, state, and local funding and demands for higher academic standards and greater accountability--will have a significant impact on staff development in small and rural schools. Along with ebbing support for compensatory education and increased focus on math and science achievement, rural schools can expect a decrease in new hires which will result in a staff of teachers with the greatest seniority--those with the most time elapsed since preservice training--while funds for inservice teacher training will be scarce. In these circumstances rural administrators will need effective staff development activities to improve the awareness, attitudes, and skills of staff members. Studies by the Rural Education Advisory Committee and the National Rural Project have identified four characteristics of successful rural school staff development programs: (1) focus on topics relevant to rural educators; (2) respond to the varied stages of adult development; (3) provide follow through supervision which enables individual teachers to translate the ideas presented in training to every day rural classroom situations; and (4) plan long-term staff development activities to address the stages of concern about change which the teachers will naturally feel as they attempt to implement instructional changes. (JHZ)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Regional R&D Services Program
Carleen O'Connell, Program Associate
Dr. Rex Hagans, Director

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Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
300 S.W. Sixth Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL SCHOOLS

There are mountain ranges so high and broad--the Rockies, the Sierra, the Appalachian--that even when we have struggled over the passes and moved to the other side, we are not aware that we have, in fact, crossed over. Several studies indicate that in our time now, and in the years immediately ahead, rural education is crossing such a divide. We are moving from a mechanically minded world of tools and products into a process world of information and abstractions. Pushed by this economic and social change, rural education in the 1980s and beyond is significantly different from the rural trends of the 1960s and 1970s. Several factors are cited:

- Federal expenditures on rural education will be substantially less in the future than in the past (Clark and Amiot, 1981; Koff, 1981)

- The federal dollars that do remain, focus less on compensatory programs and more on high achievement and academic "excellence" (Iannaccone, 1981; Ingalls, 1981)

- State and local expenditures will continue to be less in the future than in the past (Kirst, 1980; Education Commission of the States, 1983)

- The local communities as well as state agencies are demanding higher academic standards, greater instructional accountability and more effective teaching (Lerner, 1981; Shoemaker and Fraser, 1981)

- New pieces of state legislation and sophisticated teacher bargaining will leave school administrators in the future with less discretionary power to decide who is released when constricted funds require reduction in staff (Lieberman, 1981; Staub, 1981)

- The report from the Commission On Excellence In Education stresses a return to high intellectual performance, especially in math, science, writing, and higher level reasoning

The impact of these trends upon staff development in small and rural schools is significant:

- Loss of revenues squeeze out the availability of teacher aides, curriculum specialists and updated instructional materials

- The ebbing support of compensatory education will hit many small schools hards; especially those in rural agricultural areas which serve migrant worker populations

- The increasing focus on intellectual excellence--math and science achievement, higher order thinking skills, computer-related instruction--will leave many districts behind. Those who do introduce the new instructional practices will be giving their students an abstract, complex curriculum to study in a social context

which stresses concrete, manual applications. Being successful in instructional systems which do not readily transfer to real life experience requires special preparation of teachers in motivational techniques and instructional strategies

- Loss of revenues means that small districts will be hiring fewer and releasing more of their instructional staff. Of those hired, fewer will be from applicants external to the district and of those released, fewer will be those whom the administration wishes to release, due to more stringent labor legislation. The result will be small schools staffed with teachers who have the greatest seniority and therefore the greatest gap of time between their preservice training and their current discharge of duties

- The loss of revenues will mean that small districts have fewer ways of paying for substitutes, hiring workshop leaders and conducting worthwhile inservice training activities

A realistic assessment of these trends leads administrators in small schools to recognize that our society has indeed "crossed a great divide" and the outlooks and skills that worked reasonably well in the past will now generate diminishing returns. The pinch is tight. On one hand, rural administrators possess less discretionary power to affect staff compentency through hiring new members or releasing less effectives ones; on the other hand, revenues are short to pay for updated materials, teacher aides or curriculum specialists in order to intervene in poor instructional situations.

One way out of the squeeze is through effective staff development activities which enable rural administrators to improve the awareness, attitudes and skills of their existing staff members. Four factors significantly affect how effective a staff development program will be in rural schools:

- The content of the training activities must be relevant to the needs, values and skills of rural educators (Helge, 1979; NWREL, 1984)

- The process of the training system must effectively match the outlooks and needs of adult rural learners (Harvey, et al, 1961; Hunt, 1966; Joyce, 1983)

- Supervisory follow through of rural administrators must be appropriate to the needs of their teachers (Glickman, 1981; Wilsey and Killion, 1982)

- Teachers' concern which will grow and change through the stages of staff development processes must be continually assessed and addressed (Hall and Loucks, 1978)

Keeping Staff Development Topics Relevant to Rural Needs

Implementing long-range plans for staff development is particularly difficult in rural areas as high attrition frequently necessitates reinitiation of

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personnel development evey year or two. Professional isolation fosters limited access to formal staff development and technical assistance programs as well as formal professional sharing (Helge, 1981).

As stated in a major Rand Corporation report (Berman and McLoughlin, 1978), requisites for long-lasting effects of staff development include training addressed to specific needs of individual teachers as well as teacher encouragement and advice from peers experiencing success in the individual's problem area. In 1984, NWRELs Rural Education Advisory Committee listed the following as questions which are most relevant to rural educators in the northwest region:

Instruction

- What are some effective designs or strategies for coping with conflicting values that occur between new timers and old timers in a rural community?
- What kinds of instructional delivery systems will increase the effectiveness of the instructional program and student learning?
- Which instructional and classroom management techniques are effective in multigrade classrooms?
- How can rural schools develop curriculum which is meaningful to students and acceptable to the community without using specialized personnel?
- How can rural schools provide specialized facilities and instruction so students are not handicapped because they live in rural areas?
- What are the actual differences, if any, in the achievement levels of rural vs urban pupils as gauged by available measures common to both groups?

Technology

- Can current, advancing technology be used in such a way to improve the delivery of instruction?
- Can technology provide a means for more effectively managing the rural school?
- Can technology provide a means for conducting useful and meaningful staff inservice?

Curiculum Materials

- Commercial instructional materials frequently do not meet the learning needs of rural students. How should staff modify or supplement these materials?

- Rural schools often do not have personnel with time or training to develop appropriate instructional materials. Where can rural schools get the necessary help?

Socialization

- Since isolation is a problem which affects the professional staff as well as the students, and can result in a move away from rural areas, what are some effective ways to provide staff and students with broadening experiences and a variety of human iteractions?

Summarizing, the Rural Education Advisory Committee noted that staff development in rural settings must be based upon the realization that rural schools are unique in their organization, in the types of students and communities they serve, in the demands they place on other professional staff, in the types of instructional materials they need and in the instructional delivery systems they use.

Matching Staff Development to Needs of Adult Rural Learners

Staff development opportunities in rural areas must be considerate of teachers' specific developmental needs as well as district level goals and objectives. Rural staff development must include individual personal professional growth activities as well as problem identification and resolution activities according to a 1980 study of the National Rural Project. The following table examines the characteristics of rural adult learners at various stages of development and the implications for conducting staff training sessions. This information is drawn from the work of Joyce (1980) and Bents and Howey (1981) and their interpretation of Santmire (1979). The application of this model in a rural district in Adams County, Colorado, has been described by Wilsey and Killion (1982).

ADULT LEARNING THEORY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR RURAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Stages of Adult Development	Structure of Staff Training Activities
Stage 1	**Stage 1**
Adult participants have a right/wrong orientation to situations. There is only one way, their "right" way, to view the world. Only when they perceive that what they are doing is not working do they see a need for new knowledge. Information that does not fit the participant's current belief system is adapted to fit categories that exist rather than create new categories. These participants prefer hierarchical relationships. Practical concerns about what to do in specific situations (how would reasoning skills be taught in my second grade classroom?) are the major focus for this type of participant.	Staff development activities must be highly structured, emphasizing 1) what to do, 2) how to do it, and 3) circumcumstances in which it should be done. Trainers must model behavior applicable in classroom settings including what to say to students and sample materials to use. Outlines, handouts and support materials should be prioritized to help participants focus and plan. Discussions should include practical examples and applications rather than theory or generalizations. Ample time for consolidation and application of ideas must be allowed. Follow up is necessary for participants at this stage since they are often insecure in applying new learnings and prone to abandoning ideas that do not work immediately. Follow up must be directive--telling participants what to do and how to do it.
Stage 2	**Stage 2**
Participants at this stage begin to break away from strict rules and beliefs. They ask more questions and are more willing to express their various points of view. They exhibit interest in principles and issues and desire to develop their own applications or adaptations of principles. Participants at this stage of development often resist control by authority.	The training environment needs to provide choices in content and its presentation. Specific applications of ideas become a secondary focus, not central as in Stage 1. Discussions should include various points of view as well as rationale of why the views are held. Follow up assistance should be collaborative, allowing participants to express their opinions and suggest alternative actions.

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Stages of Adult Development	Structure of Staff Training Activities
Stage 3	Stage 3
Participants recognize that they have a variety of alternatives and can choose the one that best fits the situation. They are able to accommodate contradictory information by balancing or connecting differing ideas.	Participants need opportunity to participate in the planning and delivery of staff development. Training should include discussions that allow participants to share their viewpoints and experiences so that colleagues may learn from each other. In this way, learners are able to develop broader more comprehensive perspective. Follow-up assistance should be collaborative or nondirective. These participants benefit from active participation in identifying relevant issues and possible solutions.
Stage 4	Stage 4
Participants are able to synthesize information and create additional categories to accomodate new information. They approach problems and situations in a systematic fashion, which enables them to quickly review alternatives in order to make effective, spontaneous decisions.	These participants need an environment that allows them to work easily and comfortably in a variety of ways. They should select and pursue topics of personal interest. Opportunities for critical and creative thinking should be available. Follow up assistance should be nondirective, allowing these participants to design their own targets and standards for achieving their goals.

Unfortunately, Helge (1981) finds that rural administrators, unaware of the implications of adult learning theory, have seen too many occasions when staff development dollars (already in scarce supply) were spent on training situations that did not match their teachers' needs. Often suburban workshop leaders, familiar with teachers who operated at Stages 2 or 3, found themselves at a loss to give meaningful examples and modeling to rural teachers who needed clear Stage 1-oriented directions. Wilsey and Killion (1982) find that rural administrators need to locate staff development planners and workshop leaders who demonstrate skills in adjusting their presentations to meet the participants developmental needs.

Supervisory Follow Through for Staff Development

Many rural educators lack skills for grant writing, planning comprehensive staff development programs, implementing data-based systems to measure the long term impact of staff training, etc. Yet rural school administrators are

the resident experts in local culture, history regarding past efforts and rates of success, problem content areas, local resources, power and communication systems, and other informal structures which re imperative to the long term success of staff development (Helge, 1981).

It is important, according to the findings of Wilsey and Killion (1982) for school administrators to provide follow up support so that on-site supervision can give participants assistance in adapting ideas and making necessary changes in order to implement the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired in training. Just as staff development leaders must consider the match of learning environments and the stages of adult development, so also must supervisors adjust ther orientation to supervision. Glickman (1981) has identified three distinct supervisory orientations--directive, collaborative and nondirective--that can be used in providing follow up and instructional leadership. The following chart presents these supervisory orientations, the behaviors most frequently associated with each, and the amount of responsibility each orientation places on both the supervisor and the staff development participant. As shown on the chart, a Stage 1 participant needs a supervisor who assumes most of the responsibility and who directs the follow up by identifying the problems and establishes the plan of action. Given another situation with a Stage 4 participant, the administrator alters supervisory behaviors to accommodate the characteristics of the participant and personalizes the application of the follow up activities.

SUPERVISORY FOLLOW THROUGH TO RURAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

Orientation to Supervision	Amount of Structure		Supervisory Behaviors Most Frequently Used	Stages of Adult Development
Directive The supervisor determines the plan of action and establishes standards of performance. The supervisor knows more about context of teaching/learning than the participant does.	LOW	HIGH	Supervisor clarifies the problem area by collecting data and presenting plan of action, demonstrating appropriate behavior, setting performance standards, providing incentives, etc.	Stage 1
Collaborative The participant and supervisor share decision making and establish mutual contract. The supervisor believes in the importance of participant/supervisor collaboration.	MODERATE	MODERATE	The supervisor presents questions participant to clarify where improvement is needed, listens actively, initiates problem-solving, negotiates for a workable, mutual solution to the problem.	Stage 2, 3
Nondirective The participant ultimately determines the course of action. Supervisor assumes participant will make the wisest and most responsible decision about the classroom situation.	HIGH	LOW	The supervisor listens to participant, encourages his/her discussion of issues, presents ideas if requested, initiates problem solving, gathers resources requested by participant.	Stage 3, 4

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Supporting Staff Development with Systematic Change Processes

The 1980 study of the National Rural Project established that while staff development should be individualized, it is equally important that rural schools implement systematic long-term change processes via all inservice or staff development activities. The National Rural Project field activities consistently discerned that staff development procedures mandating personnel to collaboratively plan and prioritize activities for best use of scarce resources had longer lasting effects than districts merely awarding stipends or providing other vehicles for individual teachers to complete a personalized experience with no discerned relationship to total school growth and development needs. Inadequate resources of rural areas, according to Helge (1981), necessitate systematic change processes. Other research supports this finding that although external incentives such as recertification credits and stipends have value, the intrinsic reinforcements are most beneficial for long-lasting change. As Lortie (1975) indicated, teachers choose their profession because of intrinsic rewards (reinforcement from children, etc.).

Hall, Loucks and their colleagues at the Texas R&D Center in Austin, formulated a Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), which outlines "a set of stages that people appear to move through when they are involved in staff development and systematic change. According to the CBAM model, teachers express changing conerns as they move through several stages during school change which involves their "perceptions, feelings, motivations, frustration" and satisfactions about the staff development and change process."

Implicit assumptions in the CBAM Model are:

1. Change is a process that takes time and is achieved in stages

2. The individual teacher must be the primary target

3. Change is highly personal

4. Stages of change involve both perceptions and feelings of individuals concerning the change as well as their skill in its use

5. Staff developers need to diagnose their clients' location in the change process and assess the stage of change as they adapt strategies along the way

Stages of Concern about Systematic Change (CBAM)

Stage 6 Refocusing: The focus is on exploration of more universal benefits from the innovation, incuding the possibility of major changes or replacement with a more powerful altenative. Individual has definite ideas about alternatives to the proposed or existing form of the innovation.

Stage 5 Collaboration: The focus is on coordination and cooperation with others regarding use of the change or innovation.

Stage 4 Consequence: Attention focuses on impact of the change in practices on students. The focus is on relevance of the change for students, evaluation of student outcomes, including performance and competencies, and changes needed to increase student outcomes.

Stage 3 Management: Attention is focused on the processes and tasks of using the changes advocated by the staff development activities. There is concern for the time required to adapt the new practices--organizing, managing, scheduling and time demands are key concerns.

Stage 2 Personal: Individuals are uncertain about the demands of the changes promoted by the staff development, and about their adequacy to meet those demands, as well as their role in the innovation. This includes analysis of their roles in relation to the reward structure of the school, decision making and consideration, or potential conflicts with existing roles or personal commitment. Financial status implications of the change for self and colleagues may also be reflected.

Stage 1 Information: A general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more about it is indicated. Individuals seem to be unworried about themselves in relation to the innovation. They are interested in basic aspects of the change being promoted in the staff development such as the general characteristics, effects and requirements for use.

Stage 0 Awareness: Little concern about or involvement with the change being promoted by the staff development process.

The Rural Education Advisory Committee Report of September, 1983, summarized the importance of finding solutions to the problems of rural education. This report noted that the discussion of staff development needs for rural schools has been prevalent for decades. Current and sustained interest in this topic makes it possible for those people who live, work and send their children to school in rural areas to believe that rural education remains viable and that perhaps, a major nationwide effort will soon respond to their need. Rural people, regardless of how one defines "rural," have a fierce pride in their schools; in fact, they believe that rural schools have strengths in their sense of community and their close-knit caring which other types of districts would benefit from and appreciate. However, in order for this pride to survive the major social and economic changes that are bringing our society into the age of complex, abstract information processing, it will be critical that rural educators find the means to plan and implement staff development sessions which:

- focus on topics relevant to rural educators
- are tailored to the varied stages of adult development
- provide on-site follow through supervision which enables individual teachers to translate the ideas presented in training to every day rural classroom situations

- plan long term staff development activities to address the stages of concern about change which the teachers will naturally feel as they struggle to adopt and apply the instructional innovations

The obvious goal of each of these factors is to articulate and address the unique rural needs and problems and work toward achieving excellence in rural education.

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Staff Development in Rural Schools

by Carleen O'Connell

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